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MAKING THE CHURCH SCHOOL BETTER

MYRTLE FELKNER

DISCIPLESHIP RESOURCES

NASHVILLE

MAKING THE CHURCH SCHOOL BETTER: STRENGTHENING THE SMALL MEMBERSHIP CHURCH.
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PREFACE

This manual has been written for persons responsible for the total church school ministry and program in churches of few members. These persons, who primarily are the pastors, church school superintendents, chairpersons and members of the education commission or work area, are the planners and administrators of the church's ministry and program of Christian education.

The purpose of the manual is to help the educational leaders become more effective in planning, administering, and implementing church school program. Practical and useful guidelines and "how-to" suggestions are given.

This manual is in four parts. Part I, "Growing a Church School: Getting It Together," gives basic tools for starting and improving church school, such as ways of finding persons, practical steps in setting a goal, suggestions for and examples of Sunday and weekday church schools, and helpful information on job descriptions for workers.

Part II, "Resourcing the Small Membership Church School," gives helpful tips on two areas: (1) selecting curriculum, securing equipment and supplies, choosing and using space, securing teachers, and (2) the task of recruiting, training, and supporting teachers.

In Part III, "Making It Work," specific helps are provided in promoting the church school, nurturing the members, and reaching out to new persons.

This manual was written by Myrtle Felkner, an educational assistant in a cooperative parish, who has a wide range of experience in Christian education in the small membership church.

We hope that this manual will provide helpful information and practical guidance to church school teachers and educational leaders of the church school of few members.

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Throughout this handbook you will find suggestions for individual or group activity. These suggestions are boxed to help you in identifying the material for your reference and use.

I. GROWING A CHURCH SCHOOL: Getting It Together

Growing a church school is like growing a garden. Whether you start from scratch or work around some permanent plantings, it is going to require effort to prepare the ground and nurture the new seedlings.

From its early beginnings in England in 1780, to its spread across America and across most of the world, the Sunday church school has fulfilled John Wesley's expectation as a "Nursery for Christians." Two-thirds of the persons who come into the church on profession of faith come by way of the Sunday school.

Sixty-four percent of United Methodist churches have 200 members or fewer. The purpose of this handbook is to give help in the establishment and renewal of the church school in churches of small membership. The focus is on the administrative persons who are responsible for the life and work of the church school. Its intent is to provide help in assessing needs, organizing, making goals, planning and programming, and celebrating.

WHO NEEDS THE CHURCH SCHOOL?

Whether your church is rural, suburban, small town, or reservation, the question is asked. Sometimes we need to face the fact that out-migration or zero population growth in our area actually means that we are already serving all the people. If this is the case, we need to do more celebrating. There is ample biblical evidence that small is beautiful. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name. . . ."

In many cases, however, the church functions in communities which need spiritual reawakening. We are surrounded by those who are not won to Christ, and whom we have a mandate to love and serve. Jesus' commission to us is to "Go . . . and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 28:19). Sometimes even church members have fallen into lethargy in the areas of Sunday school and Bible study.

HOW TO FIND PEOPLE

How can the committed small membership church school reach out to find and serve these persons?

1. **Conduct an informal survey.** Two or three couples or individuals can be assigned to this task. *Informal* refers to style and approach, not to the thoroughness of the effort or to the recording of results.

2. **Map out the natural boundaries of your area.** These differ according to communities. While a typical rural church in one state may serve a radius of five miles, the distance in another state may be far greater. Similarly, a suburban or ethnic minority church may reach into the further parts of a city to draw people of similar backgrounds, or it may simply serve a neighborhood of a dozen blocks. Your steering committee—the concerned and dedicated persons who want to "grow a church school"—may need help from sociological or population surveys of your area to decide on a logical and realistic geographical distance for the purposes of your survey.

A rural parish may do an annual informal survey as those churches prepare for vacation church school.

- a. Draw maps of every road in a five-mile radius. Indicate each house.
- b. If it is *known* that a family residing in a particular home has a church affiliation and attends worship regularly, mark that location with a cross. This does not mean that persons do not call there; it is simply to alert the visitor.
- c. Form a committee, usually two persons, to meet with a high school student who rides the school bus.
- d. Compile information on the *known* children and youth who ride the school buses who reside in each home.
- e. Assign individuals of the church to call in homes, with a deadline date set for reporting results. Persons or couples call in *every* home, securing the names and ages of each child and youth. The information secured from the students often provides opportunity to call children by name on that first visit and even to relate to some special experience.

Issue cordial invitations to worship, and give information about vacation church school. In homes where the family is active in another church, share information about vacation church school with an invitation to attend.

- f. Note and add to maps new homes built in the community. Make welcoming calls and invite the families to worship.
- g. Set up a transportation route on the basis of this survey. Make vacation church school a total community project.
- h. In reporting and compiling this material later, it is helpful to do some grouping: children under six, elementary children, youth, adults, older adults. Perhaps you will discover an unusual number of young marrieds or singles or older citizens. Knowing your potential in each group will certainly affect your planning.

- The *warmth, genuine interest and friendliness* you display in the calling will have immeasurable effect on the effort as you go along.
- Try to avoid a paper-and-pencil, question-and-answer type of contact.
- Discover who persons are and where their interests are directed.
- Identify yourself as a neighbor; show that you are a caring Christian through your loving concern for your church and for the people of your community.
- Do not try to preach or moralize. Accept persons where they are and express your desire to include them in your life.
- Invite them to coffee and a special TV viewing with other neighbors at your home.
- Pick up the children for an afternoon of popcorn and games with your family.
- Be genuine in your approach to these new friends. How often the church seems almost manipulative, or exploitive as though our outreach were directed toward *our* benefit and the continuance of *our* life as an institution! Your message is one of love for and through Christ.

WHAT YOU HAVE GOING FOR YOU

The growing persons, the task force involved in growing a church school, need to come to grips with all the *givens* which you can identify. What are the positive forces in your small membership church that are urging you to the growth or establishment of a Sunday school?

Perhaps your list looks something like this.

1. A Commission to Teach and Learn

There is ample theological, biblical, and historical authority for the existence of a church school. The Hebrew people of the Old Testament laid great stress on the passing of the faith stories to each generation. The purpose of the local synagogue was not so much for worship as it was for the education of the people. Here the rabbi put a smear of honey on each new student's scroll, or on the tip of his finger, to remind that learning of God is sweet.

In the New Testament we see ample evidence of Jesus' own custom in this regard. We know that each sabbath it was his custom to go to the synagogue (Luke 4:16). His last earthly instruction to us had to do with the teaching of his word (Matt. 29:19).

Through Robert Raikes' efforts, Sunday schools became widespread and universally accepted. Robert Raikes did not intend to catechize so much as he intended to help the poor learn to read, and particularly to read the Bible. He was adamant in his belief that the cycles of poverty and crime might be broken as children were led to God through the Sunday school.

Today the Sunday school serves as an evangelistic arm of the church. The growth of the local church is directly related to attendance in the church school, as evidenced in the studies of Richard Myer and Warren Hartman. Persons of all ages around the world learn their first Bible verses of a loving Saviour and hear the stories of the faith in their Sunday school classes.

2. A Close-Knit Church Family

One of the positive factors most often mentioned in small membership churches is the closeness of relationships and the love and concern for each other. You have much to share with inactive or non-church families!

Your openness and the style of your church life will speak of Christian community more effectively than anything you can say.

On the other hand, it is sometimes difficult to receive newcomers into close-knit relationships. We fear that "our circle" will never be the same, or that control of "our church" may be seized from us.

These feelings need to be faced frankly. Most of us discover that new impetus comes to us under these circumstances. How gratifying it is to see the eagerness to learn displayed by youngsters who have never before heard the Good News!

Growing families are constantly becoming larger through birth, marriage, adoption. Your church family grows by the same means, while still remaining the close-knit unit that you cherish.

3. Resources

List exactly what you have and what you can obtain. These include a building, heat, perhaps a yard with trees. The list may include chairs, tables, carpet squares, a record player. There may be crayons, the means to obtain curriculum materials, pencils, or a sand box.

Think together about the persons who are your *human* resources. Who can redecorate an old Sunday school room? Teach a class? Play the autoharp? Keep Sunday school records? Host a picnic? Take children on a field trip? Bake cookies for vacation church school? Explain conservation of God's land and water? Share an ethnic history? Teach a Native American song or skill? Who can teach games? Make a ping-pong table? Umpire a softball game?

A careful look at the talents of your members helps you to know where to start your program.

- List other resources you can identify.
- Think of things you can share from home.
- Think of specially trained persons.
- Think of other community agencies that should be helpful.

4. A Support Base

Congregational support for your Sunday school is a *must*. A co-op or ice cream supper may be one way your growing persons and the pastor can summon the congregation together. No matter how small your congregation, fellowship time is important. The growing persons now need to share with the congregation the information concerning the survey, the need as they have identified it, and the resources they have listed to help meet the need.

It might also be well to look at some of the less favorable “givens” that we need to work around: unattractive rooms or a damp basement; past disagreements over time, grouping, or curricula; perhaps children attending two or more different rural school systems.

Questions and answers may culminate in the setting of a Sunday school goal. A support base extends beyond the local church and home. An outside resource person such as a certified lab leader or church leadership trainer from your area may lead in the goal-setting process. District or Conference offices can offer help, not only with leaders who assist in establishing the Sunday school, but with resourcing the school and training the teachers right in your own church (see chapter 2). The General Board of Discipleship supports the local church school through field service of staff persons, and helpful printed materials (see bibliography). Teacher training kits and audiovisuals are available for every age level and may usually be secured from your Conference Media Centers. Your community library may lend to you its film projector, television video machine.

The United Methodist Publishing House has a toll-free number which may be called for advice or help with curriculum concerns. This is Curric-U-Phone, 800-251-8591. For guidance relating to church school and the area of local church ministries beyond curriculum resources, you may call INFO SERV, 800-251-8140.

These support systems aid the local church in carrying out its mandate in its own way. No one knows your people as well as you do! You simply choose from the feast those resources that fill your need.

List support systems to be called upon. Do you have addresses, phone numbers? What services can these individuals or agencies offer your church?

SETTING THE GOAL

1. In setting a goal, *identify* where you are now and where you want to be; from a faltering, largely ineffective church school, for instance, to a vibrant group learning together. Then plan how to get there. Every member of your local congregation needs to have a part in setting the goal. Each one needs to understand what you want to accomplish, as far as possible.

2. In setting goals, try the *SAM* formula. Be *s*-pecific. Teachers, students, pastor, and administrators should know *what* to work toward and *how* to support the goal.

Make sure the goal is *a*-ttainable. It is futile to strive to increase enrollment by ten persons if there are only eight in your five-mile radius. Do not build failure into your goal, even though failure itself need not be calamitous.

Is your goal *m*-easurable? In six months can you say, "Yes, we attained a goal of three new enrolled persons. We have had two church school fellowship events. Two children have learned The Beatitudes and the Lord's Prayer." These goals, of course, may not be your local ones, though I suspect they are viable guidelines!

3. Use *Foundations for Teaching and Learning in The United Methodist Church* (available from Discipleship Resources) for guidance in church school planning. Note Chapter III, entitled "Aims of Christian Education." This is worth your diligent study. These aims will give direction to your ministry of teaching and learning.

These broader objectives include enlarging our grasp of the Bible, communing with God, understanding our Christian tradition, taking part in the church's nurture and mission, help in making ethical decisions, and communicating our faith, among others.

4. *Think* together of what your particular congregation wants to accept as specific, attainable, and measurable goals for the next year. These are likely to define more closely the aims of Christian education. For instance, under "Understanding our church tradition," you may wish to offer (a) How The United Methodist Church began and (b) How frontier church schools affected United Methodist church growth.

Some examples of congregational goals:

a. A new Sunday school, meeting in a village church wanted to:

- Offer Bible study for six non-church neighborhood children;
- Help the children know Jesus as teacher, friend, and Redeemer;
- Show them love and friendship as a church community.

b. A "faltering" Sunday school decided to:

- Show joy as a learning Christian community through the following activities:
 - A sing-along for the church school at which each generation would teach others the popular Sunday school songs of their youth
 - A 200th birthday party, complete with games and cake
- Observe our entrance into the third century of the Sunday school with a 5 percent increase in enrollment by 1981, and a 1 percent increase each year until 1990.

c. A growing church school resolved that during 1981

- Every member shall know the meaning of and be able to recite the Ten Commandments, Psalm 23, and the Lord's Prayer.
- Mission awareness shall be emphasized through the visit of one missionary during the next year; we shall contribute financially to at least one mission project as a church school; and three special after-school sessions for children shall use a mission theme.

Note that the *how*, *who*, and *when* details should always follow the setting of our goals.

Stop here to plan a congregational event, even if there are only a half-dozen of you, at which you will *set* goals.

Celebrate Your Goal!

Close your congregational meeting with song and litany. Empower a task force to move ahead. These may be the growing persons whose concern began this whole process, plus others who have caught the vision. If there has not been a Sunday school previously, you may need to elect a chairperson of education or perhaps a church school superintendent. Your pastor is always a member of the nominating committee and can advise you on this procedure.

Buy some burlap and felt. Make a bright banner that states your goal. Unveil it *next* Sunday morning. Keep congregational interest and support high!

A PLUS IS A MINUS WITH A SLIGHT MODIFICATION

Your task force has now become an agent of the entire congregation, charged with a specific task—the goal. It is important to take a clear look at your information so far, to incorporate whatever suggestions the congregation has made, and to bring on board any additional persons who have been appointed by the nominating committee. The Administrative Council, the combined Administrative Board and Council on Ministries, needs to hear and participate. It should be consulted, especially if you will need funding for the accomplishment of your goal. Much of this may have been accomplished at your congregational meeting, and the word now may be *GO!*

The Place

The physical plant itself often needs a close look. Which rooms may be used for the church school in order to best achieve the goal? How may they be renovated, redecorated, or simply rearranged in order that the best teaching-learning possible may take place?

1. If you have a small room, you may do the following:

- Remove all furniture.
- Cover the floor with sample carpet squares.
- Build shelves for supplies into corners.
- Make simple fold-up individual desks and attach them to one wall, where the boys and girls can work on projects. Much work and discussion can take place sitting on the floor.
- Place a large bulletin board above the desks to hold pictures or newsprint.

The expense is minimal and the participation of the children in the redecoration nurtures a sense of responsibility and ownership.

2. If a small class has the driest corner of a cavernous church basement, try the following suggestions:

- Paint it a bright color.
- Construct room dividers and paint them pastel colors.
- Make sit-upons from old sofa cushions. Re-cover them in various colors

With plenty of room to move the dividers, the classroom becomes cozy for conversation or spacious for games.

3. If you have a room that has become a dumping ground and long neglected, but has potential as a classroom:

- Remove the clutter.
- Take down blinds to reveal the beauty of the windows.
- Clean the woodwork.
- Tear cotton garments into rug rags, and then braid them into a colorful and appropriate floor covering.
- Ask members to donate comfortable overstuffed chairs and rocking chairs as well as a table and lamp.

There is little potential for numerical growth in this particular situation, but the feeling of friendliness that this room exudes can make it a place where several persons can give and receive loving support.

Take a walk through the church. Discuss the potential of each room. Ask local school art teachers and a creative member(s) for ideas.

The Format

A common tendency is to look at what was successful fifty years ago and to imagine a copy of this successful model. Aunt Addie says that the north end of the sanctuary used to be *filled* with youth. She is vaguely hopeful this could happen again, if only the pastor would work harder and the youth did not have cars. The church needs to face the facts: There are only eight youth in the survey area, for instance. So a program should be designed to meet their needs. Eight is two carloads to camp or to Conference Headquarters. It is enough for a softball team, give or take a shortstop. It is *plenty* for New Games, the kind you make up yourself in an open pasture or vacant lot. A church cherishes its annual Splash Party. That is the day near the end of summer when the parish van is parked in the church lot and all the kids who rode in it all summer come to help clean it up. (Rules: Come in clothes appropriate to the occasion. Bring sponges, rags, buckets, brushes, water guns and a sense of fun.)

It does not take a mob to have a success. The format may be different. Instead of closely graded classes, you may try an intergenerational unit dealing with a concern that affects you all. Refer to *The Church School* magazine and *Adult Leader* for suggestions. Many of these are especially appropriate for small membership congregations.

A whole array of learning centers may be fine in a large church, but two or three centers which allow half a dozen children across a wide age span to explore and learn at their own pace may be just the ticket for your church.

Gaming techniques enable any number of persons of two or three generations to explore a particular area. You may need to adjust suggested printed games to suit your situation. Don't be afraid to do this! Your skill will grow until you are devising the games yourself.

One such game can be played by two junior highs, two senior highs, and two adults. Each person lists five foods, five articles of clothing, and five pieces of furniture in his or her house, each on a

separate small card. The group decides the "energy points" of each item, on a scale of 1 to 10. Example: A wooden chair receives 3 points, a plastic one 10. (Plastics are made of unrenewable petroleum.) All cards are then shuffled and dealt to the players, each receiving fifteen cards. The maximum number of points that can be retained is 50. Choices are made and cards discarded. Group into discussion centers on which items persons choose to retain and why, followed by discussion of world hunger, energy problems, and the biblical passages dealing with justice and love.

The format is different, but learning is in no way minimized by lack of numbers.

Distance

Travel is a problem as you concern yourselves with conservation and cost of energy. Small membership congregations in a metropolitan area can make use of public transportation, something not available to most rural or small-town churches.

Still, this minus can be modified. Car-pooling children to Sunday school results in closer inter-family relationships and encourages more regular attendance. The elderly are more likely to accept transportation to church if it is not "just for me," but a service available to all ages. Your area survey may suggest children who are not able to attend church school unless a ride is available.

In one small membership church, the pastor reports all-day Sunday services; it is too expensive and cumbersome to be going back and forth. The day begins with Sunday school and worship, followed by a basket dinner and games. It moves into confirmation class, consisting of three persons, while the older adults visit or nap beneath the trees. Finally it ends with a youth meeting, a supper of leftovers and "sing-spiration." You may not have the energy for all that, but what a beautiful testimony to church-family awareness!

The growing popularity of church family camping is a twentieth century spin-off of the old camp meetings. The campsite need not be distant, only removed. A program which allows a creative balance of play and worship, work and discovery, interaction and privacy, rest and activity, may challenge ingenuity but vastly reward participants. Families of all sizes can plan and carry out an outdoor living experience. Camping gear may be as simple as you can tolerate—a tarpaulin thrown over a wagon bed and an outdoor fire suits some and may be all that is needed for an overnight under the stars. A brisk ballgame, a scrumptious meatball stew, fireside stories and songs of praise remind us that simple pleasures are still available to us all.

- What minus can your task force make into a plus?
- How is this change to take place?
- How will it help you to reach your goal?
- Plan for *what*, *who*, and *when*.
- Report to the congregation.

GOD MADE ALL SEVEN DAYS

Christian education can happen in a variety of settings. Many small membership churches have started weekday schools in addition to Sunday schools. Sometimes these are directed to a particular need, such as an outreach to non-church boys and girls of the community, a supplementary series on mission outreach or church history, an activity-oriented time for play or hobbies that seeks to develop Christian community, or as an outpost church school as a substitute for the Sunday experience. Let's look at some successful church schools that happen on weekdays.

SOME SUCCESSFUL WEEKDAY CHURCH SCHOOLS

A BIBLE SCHOOL

In Numa, Iowa, only 30 of the community's approximately 100 children and youth attend Sunday church school. Most of the 100 children belong to non-church families where there is no orientation to any church. Working in cooperation, the United Methodist and Independent Christian church enrolled 84 of these children and youth in a Tuesday evening school at the two church buildings. In its third year of operation with no summer classes, the average attendance is 62. The closely graded classes meet for an hour and a half. Nursery through sixth grade operate on a format similar to vacation church school, including refreshments, recreation, games, films and other media offerings in addition to music and Bible study. Ten junior and senior high youth meet together for Bible study and recreation. Some of the best evenings are spent with simulation games which are secured through the Conference Media Center or are adapted from games suggested in *Jr. Hi Ways* and other sources. *Exploring the Bible* series is used in the children's division. Larger United Methodist churches in the area are asked for left-over curriculum materials. Through their sharing, costs are minimal and the Tuesday school is assured of sound theological, biblical, and educational approaches.

A CHILDREN'S CHOIR

WHERE: A rural roadside church
WHO: Fifteen children in a 2-mile radius
WHEN: Mondays after school
HOW: Two school districts are represented. Buses leave the youngsters at the church; teachers take them home. Children from one bus sing until the second bus arrives. Later all snack on fruit and milk during a sound filmstrip. Children divide into two classes for broadly graded learning activities. Monthly community co-op suppers are well attended by all families and feature the children's choir.

MOTHERS' AFTERNOON OUT

A small community in a western state has no grocery store. Families travel twenty miles to buy shoes, hammers, or even a gallon of milk. It is a real inconvenience to mothers of both elementary and younger children.

Now the younger children come to church one afternoon a week. Mothers use the time to do the weekly shopping, take older children to medical appointments and music lessons, do special farm and ranch errands.

The youngsters at church enjoy quiet play in a small, warm, carpeted, well-equipped nursery. Mothers who take turns in the nursery teach simple songs, tell appropriate Bible stories, help the younger children develop both social and physical skills in a loving environment.

SUPER SATURDAYS

An ongoing day camp meets each Saturday morning for a month during summer vacation school. Seventeen children are involved. A committee of children and adults plans the special activities. Picking up trash from roadsides, game day at the park, field trip to the state historical building, a skating party, a nature day in the woods indicates their varied interest. Because the small rural membership is split between two school districts, two mail routes, and two telephone systems, the community-building aspect is an important part of summer fellowship for this congregation.

Look over your goals again.

Think about your resources. Ask, what needs become obvious from your survey? List them. Put it all together! Whether the needs you identify deal with growth and outreach or with joy and celebration among your congregation, your mind should be stirring by now with some ideas.

Christian education can happen any day of the week. God made all days! Choose a day and shoot for the stars!

GOAL:

Program to help meet the goal:

1. *What* will we do?
 2. *Who* can help to make it happen?
 3. *How* do we do it? (steps in planning)
 4. *When* do we complete each step?
-

SPREADING THE LOAD

The more persons from your congregation who are involved in the church school, the greater the participation in actual study and sharing. Distributing the weight among many wheels also assures us of smoother going and less danger of a great deal of weight becoming concentrated on one person. "Burned out" Christians are not the result of spiritual orientation which is too warm. They happen many times when the overload causes some parts to overheat. Often the persons who are carrying responsibilities in other areas of small church work are the ones we call upon to take leadership in the church school. How can we spread the load to maintain enthusiasm and gain maximum benefit from our opportunity to study together?

The United Methodist *Discipline* provides for a chairperson of the Work Area or Commission of Education and a Church School Superintendent. In most small membership churches, the church school superintendent oversees the work of the entire church school—Sunday school, weekday schools, vacation church school, and other teaching programs. The Administrative Council, which is the combined Administrative Board and Council on Ministries, may have one or more representatives, called coordinators, from children's, youth, and adult groups. If these persons are inactive in your church, you will need to secure their commitment to your goals and solicit their help in your planning.

There are numerous support persons performing tasks that help the Sunday or weekday school to go smoothly. The boxes below suggest names for each position or area of responsibility.

Classroom Cleanliness Coordinator

Although all churches do not employ janitors, all churches are subject to dust, tracking, and litter. Cleanliness in the classroom is an environmental necessity. It speaks of our caring and concern for persons' comfort. It speaks of our respect for others and of their worth.

Supplies and Curriculum Secretary

Although the Superintendent of the Church School is responsible for *selecting* curriculum materials, one person may be assigned to: (a) order, sort, and make available all books, papers and supplies; (b) make available the free copies of *Planbook* and *Forecast* to each teacher and the committee; (c) read the *Interpreter* carefully in order to suggest new materials; and (d) make Curric-U-Phone contact in the event of questions or problems concerning curriculum.

Media Awareness Person

Armed with the *unit* topic and its preferred resources, this person may check with the district or conference media center catalog to secure films, filmstrips, and records that may enhance the lessons or programs. Teachers and leaders will appreciate having the use of projectors and record players coordinated through one person. This may be a youth who could be responsible for setting up projectors and training children to run the equipment.

Sunday School Secretary-Treasurer

Accurate record-keeping is a *must*! Keeping track of attendance and offering is only the beginning. Addresses, parents' names, and ages and grades of all children should be accurately recorded. This person may also send notices to the United Methodist church of another community when persons move. She or he may receive these notices from the pastor in the event of an in-migration.

Cultivation Secretary

Suggestions for this person's work are made more specifically in Chapter III. If your goal includes an emphasis on growth and outreach, this is a vital link for your planning committee.

Transportation Coordinator

Every community has its very young or very old who must rely on someone else for transportation. Coordination by one person will save miles and avoid neglect.

Fund Raising

Not all Sunday schools are budgeted by the church and its finance committee. Many are expected to be self-supporting through church school offerings. These funds may have to accumulate for a very long time before the education department can secure a film-strip projector or a record player, for example. Soup suppers and ice cream socials have paid for many a coffeepot in the church kitchen—why not for bulletin boards or map sets? The fun of the occasion is part of the curriculum.

Not all of these offices are necessary in all church schools, of course. In some cases they would not even be desirable. But to use an old adage, "Many hands make light work." You are much more likely to have enthusiastic, energetic teachers and administration if the support system is widely spread throughout the congregation and if no one feels "put upon" with endless details. The teacher who has this kind of support will show it in more hours of study and preparation, more attention to other aspects of classroom environment, and more prayer and reflection upon the needs of the individual students.

*In every case, the education chairperson/church school superintendent is the *guiding, advising, coordinating* person who supervises the church school, draws together its work, and informs the congregation and its governing bodies.*

II. RESOURCING THE SMALL MEMBERSHIP CHURCH SCHOOL

You have before you a goal. You have a plan that will help your congregation to meet the goal. Let us assume that the plan involves a Sunday morning church school. This may be an entirely new school or you may be revitalizing a school which has lost its sense of direction and vitality.

FACTORS IN RESOURCING THE CHURCH SCHOOL

1. GROUPING

Selection of classroom space, curricula, and teachers will depend upon the grouping you decide will work best for you. The committee needs to examine carefully the survey material for this purpose. Let's say it looks like this:

- two pre-school children, ages 2 and 3½
- one kindergartner, age 5½
- four elementary children, one in second grade, two in third grade, one in sixth grade
- six youth, two junior highs, four senior highs
- twenty adults, wide age range

It looks impossible, doesn't it? Look at several alternative groupings.

- a. Although basically this decision can be made only on the local level by someone who knows the children, one grouping might look like this:

Pre-school and kindergarten
Second and third graders
Sixth grade and Junior High
Senior High
Adult

- b. If the kindergartner is mature, however, that person might find more stimulation and learning with the second and third graders. Also, if the sixth grader has exceptional reading and reasoning skills, the entire youth group, grades 6 through 12, might work together. The larger youth class would certainly be more fun and the incentive to meet and study would be greater. If two or more sixth graders join such a class, however, the result is usually that the older youth drop out.
- c. A third option might leave preschool and kindergarten as a separate class, placing all children from second grade through junior high in a Learning Center Open Classroom. This is particularly appealing if junior highs serve as enablers with an adult, helping to resource and teach the younger ones.
- d. A fourth option would be a totally intergenerational event. Although this is difficult to sustain fulltime, it might be a successful alternative for a summer unit, a special Lenten study, or an Advent series. For further information on how to conduct this type of class, consult the regular units in *Church School* and *Adult Leader*, as well as George Koehler's book *Learning Together: A Guide to Intergenerational Education in the Church* (available from Discipleship Resources).

Let's look at another situation: four in first grade, two in second grade, four in third grade, seven in fourth grade, three in fifth grade, two in sixth grade, and seven youth, junior and senior high. This church can separate the children's classes as indicated on the right side. An alternative grouping can be the one on the left.

Possible:

Pre-school
Kindergarten, first and second grades
Third and fourth grades
Fifth and sixth grades

Selected:

Pre-school and kindergarten
First, second, and third grades
Fourth, fifth, and sixth grades

- From your survey material, list possible groupings.
- Think of each child you know well.
- “Play” with groupings until you feel satisfied about what will work well for you.
- List the groupings below in preparation for selecting curricula and teachers.

2. SELECTING CURRICULA

Beginning fall of 1982, the Children's Bible Series will be available with the special needs of small membership churches in mind. There will be extra options and suggestions that larger classes or groups may use.

Christian Studies and *Exploring the Bible*, the United Methodist Curriculum Resources for children until summer of 1982, and the Children's Bible Series (2) are based upon sound theological, biblical, and educational foundations. Material is carefully fashioned around the age-level characteristics. Knowledge of faith and moral development stages provides growth opportunities in spiritual, moral, and intellectual areas.

All resources for children are written in either two- or three-year cycles. These are built around five general areas:

- Life and its setting: The meaning and experience of existence
- The reality of God: The meaning and experience of God's continuing revelation
- New life in Christ: The meaning and experience of continuing revelation
- Vocation: The meaning and experience of discipleship
- The church: The meaning and experience of Christian community

Ordinarily the commission on education selects the series to be used by all children's classes, aided by the teachers. Sometimes the method the teacher prefers to use in the classroom has some bearing on the series selected.

For instance, the majority of your leaders and teachers may prefer a *deductive* approach. This usually means beginning with one Bible story or verse, from which the teacher moves to the teaching/learning of values or of implications for life today. It may look like this:

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| Bible story | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Meaning for life situations — Facts to be learned — Implication in Bible history — The call to discipleship |
|-------------|--|

An inductive approach happens in the opposite direction:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| A life situation we face | <ul style="list-style-type: none">— Bible story that gives help— Words of prophets that add meaning— Sayings of Jesus— Implications for my life and discipleship |
|-----------------------------|---|

This brief illustration demonstrates why some lessons begin with life-today stories. Both methods are certainly effective. Your education commission may continue to examine all units before deciding. Samples may be received upon request to your District Superintendent, who receives copies of each unit. Or you may write The United Methodist Publishing House, 201 Eighth Avenue South, Nashville, Tennessee 37202, to request free samples for perusal.

Teacher training events are helpful, especially for beginning teachers or those who have not taught recently. Helps on how to use curriculum materials are given at each event. In addition, curriculum workshops are sometimes sponsored by districts and periodically by conferences working with Board of Discipleship staff. These events give us opportunity to examine all literature and to ask questions of editors and writers.

Matching curricula to your groups is the next step.

If children's classes choose *Exploring the Bible*, the pre-school/kindergarten may use material for two- to five-year-olds; first, second and third graders, the unit for five- to eight-year-olds; the older class to use materials designed for eight- to twelve-year-olds. If *Christian Studies* is chosen, the units will be kindergarten, younger elementary, and older elementary. A possible exception might be the use of middle elementary for the latter group, since the majority are fourth graders, and the use of these exceptionally fine materials will be a good experience for the sixth graders also.

Each quarter a *Forecast* is published which lists all curriculum resources. From this handy catalog you will be able to select youth and adult materials to fit your needs. Short-term units are also available. The *Living Bible Series* for adults and the *Bible to Life* series for youth are particularly helpful in small membership church schools.

The Church School Superintendent usually initiates or coordinates the following tasks:

1. Call or write the district superintendent or The United Methodist Publishing House for samples by _____ (date).
2. Meet with committee and teachers on _____ (date).
3. Order resources by _____ (date).
4. Show the samples selected to the congregation on Sunday. Share the groupings you plan to use.
5. Make a bulletin board display of curricula selected. Use a refrigerator box, kiosk style, if there isn't a bulletin board. Ask children or youth to help make the display.
6. Make another banner. Select one unit topic as theme. Example: Knowing Myself as a Child of God. Hang your banner in the church by _____ (date).

3. SECURING EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES

What can we get for \$100? A filmstrip projector. A record player. Or a tape recorder. Any of these can add immeasurably to the variety of teaching-learning experiences and to effectively internalizing. On the other hand, a tape recorder or a record player can probably be borrowed from someone as needed, though this borrowing technique often means that we simply do not use the method because of the bother.

Let's look at some of the reasons for ownership or availability of some basic equipment.

- a. Persons retain only about 10 percent of what they *hear* alone. This means that reading a story, lecturing upon a theme, or listening to a cassette will not alone result in great learning.
- b. Persons retain about 50 percent of what they *see* and hear. By adding a second experience, retention increases appreciably. This may be accomplished by adding a filmstrip of the Bible story or message, or by using teaching pictures and charts.
- c. Persons retain 80 to 90 percent of what they see, hear, and *do*. Drawing a slide presentation, recording a script, singing a related song, or writing a newspaper story about the Bible event are samples of activities that help to set the learning.

These facts may justify the spending of nominal amounts in order to buy the most learning for the least money. We remember, of course, that the character and witness of the teacher is always the great resource in the Christian classroom.

It is remarkable how much we can make for ourselves. Paint or drawing easels may be fashioned from cardboard grocery boxes with three sides removed, two of the remaining sides taped together to form the easel. Lap boards are sanded plywood scraps. Flannelboards are made of cardboard or ceiling tile covered with bright flannel. Sandpaper glued to the back of any figure will cause it to adhere to the flannel. Viewing boxes for slides or filmstrips are more practical in modest class space than a screen. These are also cardboard boxes, lined with dark paper on the sides with a white "screen" at the back.

Anyone with a knack for carpentry can make wooden nursery and kindergarten furniture. Probe boards may be made by the children themselves. (See *Christian Studies for Middle Elementary Guidebook*, Summer, 1979.)

Keep the equipment simple, usable, available, and busy. Consult your media center catalog frequently for ideas.

Supplies should include the usual pencils, scissors, felt markers, newsprint or butcher paper, and crayolas. Do not overbuy. Do not crowd cupboards with junk that someone merely dreams may be used to make something someday. Provide a system by which teachers may request further supplies.

A Money-Raising Event

What:

When:

Who is in charge:

Who handles publicity:

Who sells tickets:

Who reports event to the congregation (before and after):

Who orders the equipment:

- List equipment items you can afford to buy. If no money is available, use the form at the left to plan a money-raising event.
- List supplies each class will need.
 - What equipment can we make?
 - When shall we have a workday or evening to do this?
 - Whom shall we invite to help?
- Look at the survey. Would some be annoyed at the request? Would others welcome a chance to involve themselves or their children? Could ownership of the school be lodged more widely through such a community night?
- Give your purchase list to the proper support person.

4. CHOOSING AND USING SPACE

An attractive and cheerful environment is a powerful aid for learning. When babies are laid on soiled sheets in the nursery and children with bare legs play on a cold and drafty floor, you may be sure that environment is also speaking loud and clear. Our caring for the comfort and well-being of others is a form of Christian witness.

As classes change year by year it is often necessary to change rooms to accommodate them. Ownership of rooms rests with the congregation, acting through its elected committee members, and the task of assigning rooms should be an annual one. Possession of turf may be expressed by the class through its decorations, activity, and personality. However, it is seldom wise to establish permanent rights as expressed in the statements, "This has been the youth room for twenty years. We just have two youth now, but it's their room. I just can't think where to put those six kindergartners!"

The learning area is not always a room, of course. There may be several classes in one large area. Placed end to end, the number of room dividers in the small churches of America would probably stretch from coast to coast! The important factors to consider when providing the area include:

- a. **Number of occupants.** Be as generous as you can for younger children. Space to move, centers to explore, provision for play activities are legitimate responses to the child's physical needs in muscle development. To say that a kindergartner must sit still for forty-five minutes is to say that God made little kids wrong!

Do not clutter up precious square feet with tables and chairs, providing you have adequate floor covering. Watch for carpet sales or clearance of sample squares. Perhaps the squares would need to be piled up so the space can be used for other purposes at other times. No matter. Little children love to replace them, making colorful designs and combinations as they construct their own play or worship areas. Tables are not needed even for drawing and painting, which may be done on homemade collapsible easels.

- b. **Noise control.** Ceiling blocks, floor covering, and judicious placement of room dividers will help. An aisle left between class areas when classes do not share a common divider will provide an insulating space. Classes along outside walls, with a center space reserved for seeing films or pursuing projects, is helpful. Egg cartons strung from ceiling to floor on a cord effectively dull sound.
- c. **Light and air.** Given a choice, smaller youngsters should have rooms with windows and window sills. In contrast, youth often prefer the "dens." An old coal room was cleaned out after gas heat was installed in one country church. The plague of dust was endured patiently by the congregation as clean-up proceeded. The youth brought in old rugs from home, remnant cans of bright paint, a movie screen with a crippled stand that was recycled onto a roller. Though the adults call it "The Pit," the youth are fond of it and have no difficulty maintaining ownership from year to year!
- d. **Accessibility.** The young couples class meets in the kitchen, downstairs near the coffee pot. The Young-in-Hearts meet in a room with a ramp at the entrance. Junior Highs meet in the Crow's Nest.

- On a large sheet of posterboard draw a scale floor plan of your church building. Draw both levels if there are two. Mark all available space, divided into needed classroom areas.
- Plan improvements and adaptations. Use cement blocks-and-boards for storage of materials or bookshelves, for instance.
- Plan a workday for painting, waxing, refinishing.
- Check all plans with the trustees, and involve them in the effort as much as possible.
- Share the drawing at worship services Sunday.
- Ask for suggestions.
- Share your enthusiasm.

5. SECURING TEACHERS: THE TEACHER IS THE LESSON

"He who teaches the child of his fellowman shall occupy a prominent place among the saints above." (Shabbath, 33)

The teacher is the heart of the church school. Your responsibilities as administrator toward the teaching staff include recruiting, training, and supporting.

A. Recruiting

"The true guardians of the city are the teachers" is a saying taken seriously among the Hebrews.

The studies of Warren Hartman convince us that the single most important feature of the excellent Sunday school is the quality of its teachers. Too long we have considered willingness to be the primary guiding factor in our selection. Creative and prayerful recruiting for classroom leadership deserves the most intense effort.

Whom to ask

According to the *Discipline* of The United Methodist Church, the task of recruiting and nominating teachers is delegated to the chairperson of education and the superintendent of the church

school, who bring these names to the Council on Ministries for election. In churches of small membership where perhaps there is no council on ministries, teachers are elected by the commission on education or by the Personnel and Nominating Committee. In each case, the nominating persons work closely with the pastor.

Think now of the special characteristics needed in the persons who will guide your new or renewed classes. The two qualities rated highly effective for an effective church school teacher are (a) a real devotion to God and commitment to Christ; (b) a genuine love for people, especially the age group that he or she teaches or will teach. One long-term church school superintendent puts it this way: "If I feel positively about these two factors, I don't worry about the rest. We can teach methods and techniques; we can guide to an awareness of developmental needs; we can provide Bible study opportunities. But we cannot superimpose devotion to God or love of persons upon anyone. That has to be a given."

Think of your goals. What kinds of persons do you need to help to carry out these goals? What personality factors will be desirable? Do not minimize the demand on time and energy for which you are asking. You are not looking for warm bodies; you are seeking to engage warm hearts in the important task of kingdom-building.

Now list the qualities you seek, without thought of availability of or the characteristics of persons you know.

Your committee now needs to construct a profile of youth and adult persons in your congregation. Each name is placed on a file card, with one or two from your group ready to make notes. Now challenge persons to think of every instance of discipleship training that anyone has experienced. You are seeking an honest appraisal of where you are. Laboratory schools, years of faithful attendance at worship and church school, evangelism workshops, U.M.W. officer-training, VCS teacher training, youth counselor events, annual conference experiences and others will probably emerge. Enlarge this to include leadership training in any capacity. 4-H officers, FFA or FFH groups, PTA leadership, club, lodge, or civil responsibilities may speak to us of persons who have skills in relationships and/or communication. The church school can use all of that!

Enlarge your notes still further. What special experiences have your members had, either corporately or individually? Travel, military or Peace Corps service, refugee contacts, hunger and lifestyle studies, education, employment or special connectional church events may be listed.

Tackle special interests. Someone does beautiful embroidery or beadwork, another knows the history of the area; there are those with musical skills, those who remember tribal dances, those who are well versed in current events.

From your loving and detailed survey there will probably emerge a number of groups. First, there are those who are candidates for classroom teaching. Second, there are those whom we may urge to prepare for leadership through personal study and training. Third, there are resource persons who will enrich our study time through their special talents or knowledge.

- Prepare your cards, even if there are only a dozen able-bodied persons in your congregation.
- Phone or visit for information, especially for details about which you are unsure.
- Then keep updating the cards. They will remind you to make training available for those who may teach in years ahead—and you won't forget to ask Aunt Mary to demonstrate making homemade soap or butter churning at next year's Day Camp!

Have you put it all together? Do names begin to emerge? When your committee has prayed together, it is time to recruit.

- Write the names of prospective teachers here.

- Pray for each person. Pray for your concern for the Sunday school and the part they may play in it.

Doing the Deed

You are armed with your church school goal(s), which this person has hopefully helped to develop. You represent a committee which, through consultation and prayer, has become convinced of God's leading in asking this individual to be a church school teacher. You carry a copy of the curriculum materials to be used and an understanding of what the committee expects and how it intends to be supportive. You are approaching a friend or neighbor, certainly a fellow Christian, on a matter that deeply concerns you both.

Some persons enjoy informal morning-cup-of-coffee meetings; others find this an intolerable interruption of the day's work. You will know your congregational members better than anyone else.

DO's

- Make a house call. Call ahead for an appointment.
- Be prompt, warm, and responsive to questions.
- Explain the survey and the need it described.
- Share or review the goals as necessary.
- Stress that you invite this person to teach as the representative of the entire supporting congregation.
- Point out your expectations: Regular attendance in both worship and church school, conscientious planning and teaching, attendance at a training event each year or involvement in at least one of the Ten Ways to Grow as a Church School Teacher.
- Promise the support of the total congregation in specific ways: through prayer, provision of curricula and supplies, tuition for a training event, or any other ways your committee deems appropriate.

- Show the curriculum materials you have selected. Offer help, such as from the pastor or an experienced teacher with initial lesson planning. Look at preferred resources and point out where others may be secured. Inform the person where supplies will be kept, room or corner where this group will meet.
- Allow time for a decision. This person may wish time for reflection, prayer, and consultation with family members before taking on a task of this importance. Set a date by which you need an answer and depart pleasantly.

DON'Ts

- Ask on the church steps.
- Telephone to recruit.
- Play down the time and effort needed by teachers.
- Minimize the importance of the teaching mandate.
- Make persons feel guilty, coerced, or pressured.
- Stay too long. Perhaps this is a personal friend with whom it is natural to exchange family news. However, keep this within reasonable limits so that the impact and intent of your visit is felt.

So often we squirm impatiently while we await the decisions of the persons we have invited! If the background work has been carefully done, this is now entirely out of your hands. Trust the Holy Spirit to work in the heart of the person he has helped you to select.

I am scheduled to call on _____ at _____
(time) on _____ (date).

Begin now to hold this person prayerfully in your thoughts each day.

B. Training

The possibilities for growth and enrichment as a teacher-enabler are so many that we will divide them into the following categories: individual enrichment, local church opportunities, district and conference events. What a feast there is from which our local teachers may choose!

The education chairperson and church school superintendent, along with the appropriate commission or committee, may select an annual or semi-annual event to emphasize. Certainly the teachers themselves should have input in such a decision. You will need to be sensitive to both the neophyte and the more experienced teacher. Sometimes our reluctance to accept training is due to fear that we will reveal ourselves as persons with inferior skills, or worse yet, we fear that we may be shown that the way we have been teaching all these years is "wrong." It is wise to think of these events as enrichment or continuing education opportunities. Certainly those who sponsor the events and those who provide the leadership need to practice sincere and loving concern for each teacher-learner.

Essential Ingredients of Successful Teacher Training

Whatever the event you choose, it must provide two essential ingredients if it is to be successful in terms of personal growth and inspired motivation for teachers. First, it must offer spiritual food in terms of (1) warm and loving acceptance of persons just as they are; (2) a common offering

of praise, joy, and commitment to the Christ we serve; (3) an affirmation of our task in ways that touch heart and emotion. Motivation to teach the faith hardly ever springs from the intellect. It is nurtured rather by feelings and emotions that claim us and direct us to this particular expression of our discipleship.

Second, it must be based on firm theological, biblical, and educational foundations. Teachers go home to their classrooms with (1) usable and practical methods and skills; (2) a clearer perspective on the importance and purpose of Christian education; (3) a positive feeling about their role as teachers and the teaching ministry of the church, from the biblical dimension.

Beware of a workshop without specific focus or lacking the "praise-potential" that warms us and sends us into the world to witness.

Individual Growth and Enrichment

- "Ten Ways to Grow as a Church School Teacher" is a series of ten leaflets prepared by the Board of Discipleship which is available from Discipleship Resources. Two of these are particularly valuable in this section.
 - *Introduction to Responsibility* (07626) offers guidance to those who have agreed to teach in preparing for that assignment.
 - *Guided Reading* (0763C) offers suggestions for a reading program which teachers may pursue at their own pace. The suggestions are categorized in four areas: Bible, Scriptural Growth, Teaching and Learning, and Techniques and Skills. Articles in church school magazines or guidebooks may be a good way to begin, working into other materials as the desire develops.
- Other resources for personal study may include The Teaching Skill Kits. Some of these include tapes with directions to be used with prescribed worksheets. These are a valuable resource for persons who prefer to work at their own pace and convenience. The drawback is lack of opportunity to discuss new learning with others. The Teaching Skill Kits are available from The United Methodist Publishing House and some media centers.

Help your teachers plan for personal study. They need to:

- state a personal study and enrichment goal;
- discover where these resources may be borrowed or purchased;
- decide when material will be pursued and how new skills will be used.

Local Church Opportunities

a. *Pastors* who schedule time with church school teachers to discuss their curriculum resources can provide excellent learning opportunity and much-needed support. The pastor's help can be invaluable at the beginning of each new unit as theological insights and biblical background are interpreted. The teacher carries these understandings into preparation time as well as classroom time. Once a quarter the pastor may wish to preach on a subject that is covered that week by a church school class. How important that spark of recognition is as children hear "their" story from the pulpit!

b. A new type of *laboratory experience* [see *Laboratory Enterprise* (0770C) available from Discipleship Resources] designed especially for small membership churches is now available. It may be held in one local church, with the local teachers participating in a ten-hour course, or it may be held in a cluster of two or three smaller churches. In the former case, one age group is selected with whom the laboratory leader and teacher will work. In the latter case, two age levels may be selected, with two laboratory leaders.

The format includes orientation, lesson planning, teaching the selected age-level class, and evaluation. This process occurs on both Saturday and Sunday within a realistic time span. Participants gain confidence in new skills and often choose to go to a regular laboratory school following this kind of experience.

The responsibility of the education committee would be to assure full-time ten-hour attendance by the teachers, secure a certified leader (your conference Council on Ministries has a list), and provide the place for the experience. It may be necessary to arrange for a Saturday meal and to provide for the needs of the visiting leader. Your regular equipment and supplies are used.

There is a distinct advantage to having such a local church lab. The hometown teachers are at ease in their own environment and eager to incorporate new ideas, methods, and activities into the lesson plans.

c. One of the better ways to secure new teacher training is through *inservice guidance* [see *Inservice Guidance* (0765C), available from Discipleship Resources] This is similar to the practice teaching required of education graduates for public school teaching. An experienced person may be teamed in the local church school with a skilled teacher, who then guides planning, teaching, and evaluating processes. Problems receive on-the-spot consideration and persons feel able to "try it on" when there is a back-up helper to guard against calamity! The whole supportive congregation, including the class members, encourage and affirm progress.

d. *The quarterly Worker's Conference* [see *Worker's Conference* (0766C), available from Discipleship Resources] often functions as a problem-solving arena, though it can be much more. This meeting is held under the direction of the church school superintendent. It is attended by teachers and officers of the church school. Even though this may be only three or four persons, it is good to air frustrations, establish schedules, and plan special events for classes. An added benefit might be the sharing of one particular area of Christian education by a teacher who has prepared this special presentation. Use of the "I Can" workbooks is suggested (available from Discipleship Resources). Articles, games, posters, worksheets, and records which focus on development of church school teaching skills are included. Certainly *Foundations for Teaching and Learning in The United Methodist Church* should be carefully studied in a worker's conference. *The Foundations Kit* (available from Discipleship Resources) is a set of twenty-one resources to help teachers and church school leaders explore *Foundations*.

e. The local church may also offer specific, short, focused workshops. How to plan lessons, understanding faith development, creative learning activities, knowing the kindergarten child, and storytelling are some suggested topics. If at all possible, urge one of your members to engage in this study over a period of months, preparing to share with the larger group. [See *Workshop* (0768C), available from Discipleship Resources.]

Plan a local event for the current year. Which event? Who will poll teachers for need assessment? When? Who contacts Conference Office for guidelines? Where will we secure leadership? What are the costs? How do we assure full-time attendance? Who will direct the event?

District, Cluster, or Conference Events

Observation schools [See *Observation Experience* (0769C), available from Discipleship Resources] are exactly what they appear to be. Persons observe while a skilled leader teaches a class, with teachers in training having opportunities for both planning and evaluation. This is usually an eight- to ten-hour experience which includes an orientation period.

A certified laboratory school has justifiably been called the "Cadillac of the training enterprises." A total experience in planning, teaching, and evaluating is offered, as well as orientation to educational philosophy, age-level expectations, and personal growth. "It is the best model I know for life-changing growth and for the development of Christian leaders" (Ten Ways to Grow as a Church School Teacher: Laboratory Enterprise). Churches large or small can use some of that!

A newer form of enterprise is offered through a series of teacher training and development courses, published by the Board of Discipleship. These shorter six- to ten-hour events are geared to those able to manage only limited time commitments. Local leadership is utilized. Clusters of small membership churches may find these courses especially attractive. [See *A Listing of Teacher/Leader Resources for the Educational Ministry of the Local Church* (7899C), available from Discipleship Resources.]

Contact your district council on ministries through your district superintendent. Find out if a training event is planned for the coming months.

- Is it an appropriate one for your teachers?
- Can you secure their commitment to attend?
- Will someone in your church babysit, prepare a supper, or otherwise make attendance easier for someone?

C. Supporting

Supporting is fun. You are like the basketball fan club that becomes totally involved in the game. You call out the encouraging words: "You can do it! Wow, what a shot! That's our team, all right!"

You keep the floor in top condition, the ball properly blown up, the bleachers full of supporting persons. You don't boo when there is a mistake. You say, "That's all right! We know you can do better. Hang right in there!"

Later you have the basketball banquet where the players get their letters and the coach tells everyone about the memorable plays they made this season.

It is a good plan. It is called "standing behind the team," and I don't know why in the world we don't do more of it in the church school.

- *Orientation* is part of supporting. One church school teacher said, "I was recruited, handed a book, and shown a room. I never saw anyone again until it was time to recruit the next year."

Orientation may include locating where supplies are stored, how records are kept, when the offering is taken, how to open windows or adjust heat, when doors are unlocked for setting up, whether it is permissible to tape pictures to walls or mark with chalk on floors. It expresses openness to questions and suggestions. It *checks back* to see if all went well the first few times in the class.

- Supporting includes *recognition*. It says “Well done!” and spreads the word that the new teacher in the nursery is something else! There is personal affirmation, not only of the classroom activity, but of lifestyle. The church school superintendent who recognizes and expresses appreciation is giving meaningful support.

Honor teachers with special events. Give a banquet. Recognize a “Teacher of the Year.” Write articles for the church newsletter, if there is one. Whatever the means you take, these affirming actions speak loudly to teachers of the worth and value in which they are held by the congregation.

- Constant support is evidenced through the *providing of resources*. Make sure that curricula arrive early, are distributed promptly, and are in sufficient number. Gather pictures from central files if this is necessary, order films or records from the media center. Provide proper supplies and service class areas regularly.

Many teachers will spend two to four hours weekly in preparation and teaching. That kind of dedication deserves the best support you can give.

Make some plans now for year-round teacher affirmation. Some may seem inconsequential, but even the less dramatic gestures are important. Put a date beside each plan so you will not forget.

January: Take pictures of all teachers for the bulletin board.

February: Have a “Sweetheart-of-a-Teacher” banquet.

March: Give a flowering plant to each teacher, with a note of appreciation.

April: Send Easter cards.

May:

June:

You finish it. Make it fun!

III. MAKING IT WORK

Is it falling into place? Your class spaces are ready, supplies on hand, the curriculum distributed to your newly recruited and trained teachers. Whatever the event that your survey showed was needed, you have made conscientious and meticulous preparation. The congregation, whether there are six persons or sixty, is informed and ready. Let's go!

For the purposes of illustration assume that you are beginning a Sunday morning church school. The suggestions listed in this chapter are fully as applicable for other teaching-learning programs such as a weekday church school, vacation church school, or a single parents' fellowship.

HOW TO GET STARTED

1. Begin your school with a special day. Perhaps this could be called "Round Up." Many of us remember the joy of a fall Rally Day. Some congregations hold summer Children's Day. Decide on an opening day and give it a name.

Do it now.
Do it here.

Announce the name of the starting event at church worship services. Make a banner and hang it.

2. Publicize the event. The extent and kind of publicity is limited only by your imagination and energy.

Look through that list of resource persons. Who can draw, make posters, write a clever skit? It is time to recruit these persons to use their special skills. Any of the following are effective.

- a. Make posters for store windows, church bulletin board, the post office, or wherever people congregate in your community. Name the event and give the essential information: place, time, date, and who attends. Make the poster colorful, large enough so that it does not appear cluttered, and include "Bring a Friend." Two will plan to come where one may not tread alone. Your media center may have a filmstrip on how to make posters.
- b. Submit news stories for your daily or weekly paper. Some small newspapers may write the story, complete with pictures, if you visit the news office and explain your effort. At any rate most papers are glad to run the news stories you may write yourselves.
- c. Ask the nearest local radio station for time on the air. Some stations run an interview-type program, such as "Talk of the Town." Other alternatives might be news announcements, the weekly religious news, or a call-in talk show. Investigate all the possibilities that will help you to get the word around.
- d. Design a colorful, attractive postcard to send through the mail. Youngsters particularly love to receive personal mail and will remember the day your new Sunday school begins with this kind of invitation. If you can afford the extra expense, mail the card in an envelope with a tiny magnet and a note suggesting that it be posted on the refrigerator door.

Draw a daisy with felt markers, attach a smiling-face sticker, or simply write each line with a different color fine-line pen. The message you convey is one of brightness, friendliness, and warmth. That kind of invitation speaks "love."

- e. Follow up the mailed invitation with phone calls. Ask if there are any questions. Explain briefly what you will offer. "We will use music, stories, and films to teach about Jesus." Ask if transportation is needed and have a plan to offer. "Mrs. Johnson is going by your house, and she will be glad to stop for you."

There is a fine line between inviting and pushing. None of us likes to be pushed. Invite prayerfully and sincerely, out of a real concern for families, and then allow the Holy Spirit to be at work.

- f. If this is a revitalizing effort—meaning that three or four children, youth, or adults may already be attending a Sunday morning church school—by all means involve these persons in the preparation of cards or posters. They might also make mobiles for the classrooms, weave sit-upons from newspapers for floor sitting, paint bookcases, and become substantially involved in your effort. The word-of-mouth news from them that something great is about to happen will aid your effort.

What publicity efforts will you choose to use? Who? When?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

3. Now you are ready for a new beginning. Relax on this "beginning day."

- a. Call your teachers together early. Join in a time of prayer. Help each other set up your rooms or spaces. Take time to affirm each other and what you have done to lead up to this day. Then enjoy! Your committee deserves to savor the day, and your pleasure in it will color the total occasion.
- b. Greet people as they arrive. Indicate where they are to go. Possibly you will want a time when everyone is together. (See chapter 4 for more on opening exercises.) Begin with familiar hymns and choruses. Do not ask for requests this time. Keep things moving. Check with the pianist ahead of time with a list of songs. If you have a theme song, introduce it but do not learn it now. This may be done more easily and more effectively in the classes. You might want to use "The Great Parade," a favorite Avery and Marsh number.
- c. Tell about each teacher briefly. Ask the teachers to wear or carry a sign indicating class grades. This will help to sort out the students quickly.
- d. Each teacher in his or her class space will want to do some special get-acquainted group work before moving into the regular lesson. It is especially important on this first day that every person feel cared about, welcomed, and recognized as a special child of God. Is there a birthday? Did Joel make the winning hit in last night's softball game? Is John's grandmother in the hospital? Teachers should also try to learn all names and to be open in sharing their own lives and faith journeys.

- e. Children may be dismissed directly from their classes with expressions of friendship and invitations to return.
- f. Evaluate right away. Allow each teacher and committee member time to share feelings about the day. Ask each teacher to share what went best in his or her class. Compare attendance lists. On your original work map, locate homes of persons who attended and color them green, symbol of growing. Post the map on the bulletin board or kiosk. If there are obvious improvements to be made by next week, decide upon these and then go home to a well-deserved Sunday meal.

| | |
|---------------------------|-----------|
| Feelings shared—one word! | |
| Hurried! | Terrific! |

| |
|--|
| Feelings for next week: We need name tags. <hr/> <hr/> |
|--|

HOW TO NURTURE THE PEOPLE

Sometime this week, contact should be made with every person who attended the Sunday school event. You will know your people well enough to decide what is most appropriate among these possibilities.

1. *The follow-up postcard.* Again, make it unique with sticker or drawing. Each teacher may receive a prepared supply of these after class, which should be signed and mailed during the week. Perhaps the message is simple: "I'm glad you came. Be sure to attend next Sunday." Better yet is a personalized message of appreciation or friendship.

2. *A home call.* Take a reminder of the happy time you spent. The finger-painting which is now dry, a take-home paper, or perhaps a badge which says "I go to Sunday school" will be appreciated. Badges are easily made with a Badge-a-minut kit, available from Cokesbury. Or make them from circles of colored posterboard, safety pins, and masking tape. Write with fine-line felt markers.

| |
|---------------------------------|
| Amy goes to Sunday school |
|---------------------------------|

Be careful not to bribe persons. The warm fellowship, the joy which comes from knowing Jesus, the opportunities to worship and learn are rewards that are lasting. Reminders are meaningful only when they symbolize our experience as the body of Christ. This is what keeps us gathering again and again in the Lord's name.

3. *Phone contact.* With adults and youth, a simple sincere contact that expresses your pleasure in the common experience is sufficient. Children will welcome assignments that give them opportunity to help prepare for the next session. Can they bring supplies for a project? Who can offer garden flowers for the worship table?

Listen for suggestions. Be grateful if someone cares enough to mention changes or improvements.

4. *Prayer.* Remember the persons who didn't come, also. Pray for them. Continue to invite them. Include them in your special community events. Ask for their help when you really need it. If the ongoing Sunday school meets the learning, relating, growing needs of the people, that news will get around.

5. *A short news item in the local paper.* "Thirty-two people attended the new Sunday school at Faith Church last week," is a helpful short news item.

List the families represented. What follow-up seems best? Who will do it? When?

ONGOING NURTURE IN THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

Nurture and care are also expressed through careful *record keeping*. A membership cultivation secretary needs only a shoe box, index cards, and a couple of pencils for effective recording of details which help both pastor and teacher to be helpful and supportive. Birthdays, anniversaries, class in school, dates of baptism and confirmation, illnesses, honors, family members, hobbies or special interests may be recorded.

One evening two friends sat next to each other during a game at a church school gathering. Suddenly one of them burst out, "I've known Susan for sixteen years, but I never knew we both were bird watchers!" They joined a local group who counted migratory birds at the lake. More important, their new bond drew them and their families into closer relationship with the church, and they sought ways to use their hobby in service.

Do not record information of a personal, private nature. When friendships develop from repeated contacts, discretion must grow correspondingly. A person's obvious, personal loving interest in a family may result in confidences that must be kept.

It is important for this information to be available for use. Teachers will want to send birthday and anniversary greetings. Prayer announcements and requests may be shared when there is illness, death, birth, or other rites of passage. Records are a tool, not items for the archives.

Now plan for ongoing nurture in special departments.

At the birth of each child you may wish to:

- Send greetings from the church school.
- Ask parents to enroll the child on the cradle roll. (One child, born in the wee hours of a Sunday morning, had her name on the cradle roll before the Sunday school hour. Now an adult, she was able to do the same thing for her daughter. Clearly, this gesture signifying her early relationship to the church was important to her.)

- Give the book *A Baby Is for Loving* (available from Cokesbury) and other brochures and leaflets.
- Provide child care during the church school hour for infants up to two or three years old if this is desired.

Slippage often occurs between baptism and enrollment in church school. Periodic checking of the cradle roll and your survey information will enable you to guide two- or three-year-olds into the regular church school nursery class. Many churches give a small gift or have a modest ceremony that recognizes this rite of passage. Even if the parents do not choose to attend regularly, follow-up calls at ages two, three, and kindergarten will keep you aware of the child and keep this name before you as a potential member of the vacation church school and other programs. All such contacts should be noted on the cards kept by the membership cultivation secretary.

Another point where slippage occurs is during transition from childhood to youth. It is true that if children are initiated into the youth class too young (sixth grade, for instance), then the high school juniors and seniors will drop out. A junior high-senior high combination is likely to work, depending on the local situation and on the public school pattern. Great responsibility is placed on leadership and the youth planning committee to keep subject matter relevant, methods current and interesting.

The church school should take added responsibility for initiating and sponsoring extra activities for this age group. The peer structure you may hope to build, the offering of the safe place in which to question and explore, the modeling which is an effective part of moral development require added opportunities and environments for meeting. These transition years can be exciting and meaningful. Or they can be drop-out years. Congregational support and caring may make the difference.

In Warren Hartman's *Membership Trends: A Study of Decline and Growth in The United Methodist Church* we find a significant statement, "The dominant factor which attracts persons to the church and holds them is a sense of being accepted, loved, and wanted" (p. 7). Even though, traditionally, we assign the supportive role to the class teachers who know the persons so well, it must be the task of the total congregation as well. In the small membership church it is particularly helpful for youth to be actively involved as policy makers. Their service on the Christian education committee, their participation in the ongoing life of the church body where their opinions are respected and their desires reflected in program, result in at-home feelings. Churchmanship thrives in affectionate, open exchange of ideas among peers and between generations.

The small membership church can ill afford fragmentation of families or lack of communication among generations. In *A Look at Some Excellent Church Schools*, Warren Hartman summarized a study of 681 church schools that had been identified as strong, healthy, and working effectively. Eight marks of excellence emerged. We quote from the first of these eight: "Effective church schools demonstrate an active love and concern for individual persons at every stage of their development. There are deliberate efforts to encourage persons to establish and maintain regular and continuing relationships with others in and through the church school. Such a climate of love and concern not only attracts and holds persons but also supplies the conditions which are most conducive to learning and growth in the Christian faith and life."

Youth who receive love and concern and then have opportunity to express love and concern through their own involvement in the church school are not likely to become drop-outs.

Ongoing nurture in the church school extends to the elderly, many of whom have spent many decades in Bible study classes. The smallest church is able to support an outpost Sunday school for these persons.

One small church in Iowa has provided a Monday afternoon class in a nursing home for eight years. Theirs is a simple format of hymns, Bible story, and a short Bible film supplied by the conference media center. Later they visit with class members with whom they sometimes enjoy a cup of coffee.

Another small membership church has a visitation program where each elderly person in the radius community receives a personal call and a Bible study book each quarter.

These programs seem modest but bring great blessing to the church schools that seek to serve. One lady was heard to say, "At first, I thought I was doing something *for them*. Now I can't miss my nursing home class, because they do so much *for me*."

HOW THE PASTOR SERVES AS EDUCATOR

In small membership church school workshops across the country, the question is repeatedly raised: "Our pastor has three churches. There's no way he or she can be in Sunday school. What can the pastor do to help us?" What the pastor can do as educator:

1. Meet with the teachers and with the administrative committee. Spend some time of study together, as outlined in Chapter 2.
2. Teach children and youth in after-school and evening experiences, and certainly in vacation church school or day camps. Pastors thus grow in the effectiveness of their total ministry with children.
3. Have constant, ongoing contact with the children and youth of the community. Example: The upper elementary children of one town seem to experience mass trauma! New schools are built in their community, and for the first time all three grades are being bused to the county seat to attend classes. Early the first morning, children begin to gather on the front porch of the pastor's home. Some play with his dog. Others sit on the steps and throw sticks at the road. Others straddle the porch railing and wait patiently for the pastor to appear. No one knocks on the door. No one makes any disturbing noise. They wait patiently for a young man they trust to come out to talk with them.

Pastor Jim, in quiet reassuring ways, supports them, expresses confidence in their ability to get along with the "town kids," welcomes them back each afternoon for a rap session. Gradually the porch kids drift away as adjustments are made.

Probably none of this will happen if the pastor does not have constant, ongoing contact with the young children of the community. To wait for the confirmation experience, an all-too-common pattern in our church, is to lose years of opportunity. Pastor Jim has the constant contact of a weekly class in Monday School. The kids know him and have confidence in his guidance and in his enduring affection for them.

Many small membership church pastors do not live close to the communities they serve. The weekday school is one of the best ways to get to know children personally, aside from the wonderful and envied opportunity to live among them in the small town.

4. If you live in a town of 500 or 600 persons, the best thing you can do in ministry is to know every child in town by name, by family. This is not to suggest proselytizing. It is only to be open, available, willing to accept responsibility to be the "significant other." Relate in every possible setting to children in natural, unaffected ways. Pitch a few balls to kids practicing in the park; study under a tree on a summer day. In most small communities, that will bring a number of children who want to talk. Supporting the church school—and indeed, the whole role of pastor as educator—includes knowing the constituency. Often we interpret that as knowing the business people downtown or making calls at the homes of our members and friends.

The church school grows through families, but it also grows through our contacts with the unempowered. Your activity in every other work area—in evangelism, in mission, in social concerns—is enriched by the children who see Christ in a person who functions as he did: leading, teaching, conversing, picnicking, celebrating, caring, welcoming.

5. Teach or assist in leading evening classes for young adults, couples, or long-established fellowship groups. The undated Lives of Faith series, which examines such Bible characters as Abraham, Moses, and Mary may run for a quarter or may be condensed into six or eight sessions. Short-term evening classes may appeal to farmers and ranchers, employed persons who work on Sundays, or to persons who themselves teach a Sunday morning class.

Many small membership church people are good Bible students. Ninety percent of the leadership of the church have been church school scholars in childhood; they have been nourished by years of Bible reading. Pastoral leadership as they move into new methods and deeper meanings is cherished.

6. Recognize and honor church school workers. Some years ago church members usually regarded the trustees as holding the prestigious positions in the life of the church. Sunday school teachers were pretty far down on the totem pole.

No more! In a recent small membership church study, pastors were asked to identify the particular lay persons who they felt contributed the most to the life of the church. Two leaders emerged, the church school superintendent and a church school teacher. These persons, whose work is vital to the growth of the church and to the growth in discipleship of its individual members, merit the recognition and affirmation of pastor and congregation.

- Mention their work from the pulpit.
- Pray both privately and publicly for their efforts. Remember them as individuals with joys, sorrows, successes, and failures—co-workers who look to you for support and nurture.
- Arrange a coffee or brunch at the parsonage during the Christmas season or on a spectacular May morning.
- Help the education committee plan a congregational dinner honoring teachers.
- Install them each fall in a special ceremony.
- Drop a thank you card in the mail once in a while.
- Ask a children's class to sing a special song during worship.
- Ask a teacher to prepare the children's sermon some Sunday. In general, show a raised consciousness for the church school as a vital part of your ministry.

CONTINUING THE OUTREACH

When new persons or families move into your radius area, the process you follow in establishing your Sunday or weekday church school is repeated—but fast! Ninety percent of those persons who receive a call within twenty-four hours of moving will come to your church. The statistic drops dramatically if the call is within a week or an even longer period of time. Since the pastor often lives out of the community, it will probably fall to the church school to make these contacts.

You may carry a kit in your car for your welcoming call. It contains a student book, take-home paper, and a sheet of suggested material for each family member.

Refer again to the map, now marked with attending families. Divide streets and roads, assigning a resident family of each area to be responsible for newcomers.

When newcomers attend church school and worship, recognize and introduce them. Recognize also the nurturing persons who called on them to invite them to come. Make sure that newcomers have a written schedule of your church program, including all church school and other group meetings. Nurturing persons continue the contact in order to ease the transition into the church fellowship.

Look again at the goals. Are you winning others to Christ? Are you experiencing the Christ-community both in your reaching out labors and in the resulting church school classes? Can you point to one instance that represents spiritual growth among those you are reaching? Refer to *People Power* for more ideas on increasing membership and attendance in the church school (available from Discipleship Resources, 0541C).

Be fair in your evaluation. Then let God know you have faced the facts and await further instructions.

IV. CELEBRATING THE FELLOWSHIP

You are the laos, the people of God. As such you have the two-fold privilege of celebrating who you are, and of bringing others to faith in Christ.

As administrators of the small membership church school, you have been concerned in this booklet with the details that lead up to teaching persons to know the Bible and faith story. One educator puts it, "I can't teach them if they're not here." Administration enables the teaching task, first and last.

The other aspect is a privilege in joy. The lively expression of your love for Christ and for each other is the greatest witness of all. The church school that sings, plays, prays, and celebrates as the community of the laos is truly the one that grows and that evangelizes the greatest community around it. Administration provides the opportunity for the learning, worshiping community to be in celebration. This happens in a variety of settings.

OPENING, CLOSING EXERCISES

Probably no church school will want to do both. It consumes too much time that could be used in the classes. Also, songs, scripture, and meditation may need to be geared to the individual age group.

A common mistake has been to eliminate both of these experiences, at the expense of building and maintaining community spirit. We have thrown out the baby with the bath water. Your planning committee needs to examine your past customs, if any, to allow for a time of praising and rejoicing as the total intergenerational laos. Long, dry discourses or "meditations" are not of much value, but spirited singing, intentional caring, and valid witnessing are expressions of our celebration of the faith.

Look at how one committee handles a change in approach.

The Customary Way

Opening Exercises:

Hymn, chosen by superintendent
Hymn, by request
Scripture, chosen by superintendent
Meditation, by superintendent
Birthday offerings

Meditation, by superintendent
Birthday Offerings
Hymn, request
Dismiss for class

Closing Exercises:

Hymn, chosen by superintendent
Class rolls and Offerings, announced by
the Sunday school secretary
Award to class with highest attendance

Award to class with highest attendance
Classes share Bible verses memorized
Benediction
Dismiss

When teachers complain that too much class time is absorbed by the exercises, the following plan can be substituted:

No opening exercises. Students go directly to class area on arrival. Teachers prepare special involving activities for early-comers. All teachers are requested to be in class areas ten minutes before the announced starting time.

Closing exercises: Classes are called together with a song. Sometimes the accompanist is a piano player, but often it is a teenager with a guitar who leads in a popular modern folk hymn. Fortunately for them, they also have a lady who is terrific on the banjo! When classes have assembled, one more song is enjoyed together.

Birthday offerings are brought to the altar. Sometimes the years are counted out, one by one, as the pennies are dropped in the plate. "Happy Birthday" is sung, and the offering is dedicated to the work of missions.

The class with the largest attendance is given the attendance flag for the week. That class stands to receive the flag and to repeat their Bible verse for the day.

Benediction follows, with an invitation to remain for worship.

The abbreviated form is appreciated, and it retains the celebrative and caring format so cherished by generations of Sunday school scholars.

Take some time now to determine your own celebrative schedule. It will depend somewhat on whether worship services are before or after Sunday school. Build in some flexibility. Allow for differences in taste. Older folk may long for some of those old-time hymns, while the youngsters want to sing "Zacchaeus Was a Wee Little Man" or "The Wedding Feast." Can you be responsive to both desires?

SPECIAL EVENTS

Robert Raikes and Hannah More, early Sunday school founders, may have enjoyed the first Sunday school picnics. Mr. Raikes sometimes gave the children little sweet cakes after their Sunday school lessons. Miss More went further; she was known to furnish meat and pudding for special days. In the Channel Islands Victor Hugo had forty children from the Sunday school to dinner with him once a week!

The fellowship of the meal enhances Christian relationships. What fun when this ceremony of togetherness is extended to include games, songs, and appreciation of the outdoors!

In a word, the Sunday school picnic. Reach back into your childhood for the ring of horseshoes against the stake, the three-legged races, the ice cream cones under a shady tree. There are treasure hunts, baseball games, musical chairs.

Today the Sunday school picnic is more likely to include New Games, a series on non-competitive group activities that stress the value of the cooperative community. (See *The New Games Book*, edited by Andrew Fluegelman, Dolphin Books, Doubleday, New York, 1976.) Whatever you choose, put the tables under the trees in the church yard and enjoy the 200-year-old ritual of the yearly Sunday school picnic.

Consider also the class party, each appropriate to its age group. Sponsor Family Nights which may feature swimming, roller skating, sledding, or bowling. The impact of the event may be

- to enjoy relationships within the Christian community;
- to celebrate our oneness in Christ;
- to mark anniversaries in our church or in the Christian faith;
- to attract new persons in our community, providing an informal setting for introductions and getting acquainted;
- to preserve and share special ethnic customs.

This year we will celebrate (circle one)

1 2 3 4 5 events

These will include a

- _____ family coop supper
- _____ summer picnic
- _____ game and sports festival
- _____ media event
- _____ field trip
- _____ lake or river excursion
- _____ other
- _____ other

Continue your planning as before.

*Who
does
what
by
when?*

PROJECTS THAT HELP

An expression of Christian caring is often participation in a project. Older children and youth may take part in the annual offering for UNICEF. Investigate the Advance Specials that are approved in your conference. Visit the site of such an inner-city or rural ministry to discover what is being done and how you may contribute. Ask your conference council on ministries or district superintendent about work camps.

Express caring through local situations as well. Rake lawns for the elderly. Have a trash pick-up day in your settlement or small town. Beautify the church grounds with new trees, shrubs, flowers, or rocks.

The church school may be a setting for the development of mission understanding. During a Wednesday School class, one first grader said in astonishment, "I thought missionaries were dead!" Her experience reveals that, in many persons' minds, a missionary goes to a far country and is never seen again. Make an activity center available to all church school members in response to this need for understanding.

Post a picture of a missionary couple from the local church together with a childhood picture of one. Make paper, pencils and pens, envelopes and address available for letter-writing. A tape recorder can be switched on to record short messages of greeting to the mission couple. Communications are established between mission and children which hopefully will lead to visits and meaningful participation in the work of the mission couple. Missionaries are now very much "alive" to those youngsters.

Children's Fund for Christian Missions supports a variety of projects. These funds are the contributions of children. The majority come from Vacation Church School offerings. The fund is administered through children's workers at the Board of Discipleship. Information about the project may be secured from P.O. Box 840, Nashville, Tennessee 37202.

LEARNING THROUGH TV AND MOVIES

Guided viewing is a learning tool available to almost everyone but used effectively by few. Children, youth, adult, or intergenerational classes select a TV show or a movie to view as a group. Assignments are suggested, varying according to the goal or purpose.

For example: Part of the group may watch for instances in which problem-solving happens in accordance with Christian precepts. Others may observe instances of violence or moral dishonesty. The post-discussion may center on acceptable tools of problem solving. Biblical guidance should be sought.

Celebrative? You bet. The change in setting alone may result in relational growth. Mind-to-mind and heart-to-heart probing of values and lifestyles may not lead us to complete agreement, but it does lead to clearer recognition of ourselves as unique children of God. We can celebrate that!

Intergenerational events centered in the home serve to bond the church family. Guided TV viewing is only one such event; add to the list vacation church schools, family nights, hobby day, Christmas preparations, cooperative gardening, or ribbon making for festivals.

SPECIAL DAYS IN THE CHURCH SCHOOL

Growing church schools celebrate their special days. The festivals of Easter and Christmas are centered in the church, not in the secular celebrations. The rituals of celebration which the Hebrews enjoyed marked the change of the seasons and served to remind the people of God of the constant presence of God in their lives. The merrymaking, the blow of the trumpet, the procession to the temple, the significance of ceremonies which served to remind them of the working of God in their tribal history are all aspects of a religious celebration that we may capture for our own.

Celebrate a baptism with a "coffee" on the church lawn. Observe confirmation with a caravan visit to each confirmand's home. Have a "Spring Fling" when God washes the world with green.

Let us celebrate who we are:

- God's children in a small membership church school
- Growing persons, seeking to expand in our understanding of God's will for us in our situation
- Seeking persons, willing to share our warmth and our love, secure in the fellowship of God and the people of God of this particular place
- United Methodists, where the *majority* of the church schools are small and where, indeed, the Sunday school is a nursery for Christmas

Warm is a small membership church school.

Warm is a teacher who cares.

Warm is Big.

(Come on, try it. . . .!)

Warm is _____.

Warm is _____.

Are you up to another
banner?

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES FOR CHURCH SCHOOL WORKERS

The following resources are available from Discipleship Resources, P.O. Box 840, Nashville, Tennessee 37202 (Telephone: 615-327-2700).

A Look at Some Excellent Church Schools. Eight marks of excellence are identified as well as strong features of these particular church schools. (0559C)

Church School in Churches with One Full-Time Pastor. Organizational and administrative guidance for leaders in church schools served by one full-time pastor; edited by Roy H. Ryan. (0556C)

The Church School of Few Members. Suggestions for leaders in church schools of fewer than 75 members by Wright Pillow and Jennie Youngblood. (0555C)

People Power, Increasing Membership and Attendance. A bibliography by Millie S. Goodson designed to help church schools consider and work for improvement in this area. (0541C)

Ten Ways to Improve Your Church School. (8301C)

Foundations for Teaching and Learning in The United Methodist Church. Booklet designed for all who plan and do the church's ministry of teaching and learning. (0800C)

Foundations Leader's Guide. A guide for planning and leading a study of *Foundations*, by George Koehler. (0805C)

The Foundations Workbook. A do-it-yourself guide for studying *Foundations* and using it to improve Christian education in your congregation, by Nancy T. Folz. (0821C)

The Pastor as Educator. A manual by Taylor McConnell designed to help the pastor understand his or her potential in the program of Christian education. (7871BC)

Learning Together: A Guide For Intergenerational Education in the Church. Deals with the why, what, and how of educational experiences with two or more generations together in the church, by George E. Koehler. (0740C)

The Implications of Theology for Teaching Method. An analysis of some of the fundamental doctrines of Christian theology—the nature of God, Christ, Spirit, and man—and their relationship to individual teaching methods, by Douglas Wingeier. (7873C)

Children and the Bible. The objective of Bible study is to come to know God's love and live in that relationship. (0149C)

Equipping Rooms/Space for Children. Making the most of learning space for children of all ages is the thrust of this resource. Provides a brief overview of physical and educational equipment needed. Can be used by teachers and leaders of children. (0165C)

Recruitment and Orientation of Church School Teachers and Leaders. A collection of helpful articles dealing with the volunteer worker. (8007C)

"I Can" Series. Four notebooks for workers with children. Articles, games, worksheets, posters, records assembled in notebooks. Primarily for individual use but may be used by teachers and other persons together. *I Can Teach Young Children* (0112C); *I Can Teach Younger Elementary Children* (0113C); *I Can Teach Older Elementary Boys and Girls* (0114C); *I Can Plan for Children's Ministries* (0115C).

Workers with Children: A Bibliography. A chart and description of leaflets in the Workers with Children Series and other leader guidance resources. Includes resources on understanding and working with children, nursery through elementary. (0170B)

Planbook for Leaders of Children, Planbook for Leaders of Youth, Planbook for Leaders of Adults (annual). Designed to assist teachers and leaders of church school in developing and resourcing ministries with children, youth, and adults. Also available from Cokesbury.

The following resources are available from Cokesbury.

Forecast (quarterly).

The Church School. A magazine for persons responsible for planning, developing, guiding, promoting, and evaluating the Sunday school and other educational ministries.

Teaching Yourself to Teach. A basic manual for church teachers. An excellent resource for local church training events.

Twenty Ways of Teaching the Bible. Outlines of lesson plans that can be used by teachers desiring to use an inductive approach with older elementary, youth, and adult students.

Exploring the Bible with Children. Excellent resource by Dorothy Jean Furnish on understanding the Bible and its use with children.

CURRIC-U-PHONE—1-800-251-8591. A toll-free long-distance service that provides persons with an opportunity to ask questions, seek assistance, express opinions, make suggestions, and learn more about United Methodist church school curriculum resources. NOT FOR PLACING ORDERS. Call 8:00 A.M.–4:00 P.M. CST.

INFOSERV. United Methodist information service — 1-800-251-8140. 9:00 A.M.–3:00 P.M. (in all time zones). A toll-free long distance service.

